

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action dated April 23, 2008, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration based on the above claim amendments and the following remarks. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as presented are in condition for allowance. Prior to entry of this response, Claims 1-37 were pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36 are independent. In the Office Action dated April 23, 2008, Claims 1-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e). Following this response, Claims 1-37 remain in this application. Applicants hereby address the Examiner's rejections in turn.

I. **Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)**

In the Office Action dated April 23, 2008, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-37 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,931,114 ("*Martin*"). Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36 have been amended, and Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended, add no new matter and are patentable over the cited references.

According to exemplary embodiments, a signal switching point SSP may provide an area party line service. (See specification page 5, lines 16-17.) When a caller places a call directly to the SSP, the caller may dial a special number for the area party line service. (See specification page 5, lines 17-18.) For example, the caller may dial a star code (*##) or a number such as #11. (See specification page 5, lines 18-19.) The SSP may detect the dialed number indicating the area party line service and may then bridge the caller into an area party line with other callers. (See specification page 5,

lines 19-21.) Because the SSP may provide service to a limited geographic area, the area party line provided by the SSP may be provided with an inherent geographical significance. (See specification page 5, lines 21-23.)

Amended Claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the cited art for at least the reason that it recites, for example, "wherein the first telephone call providing the area party line indication comprises dialing at least one digit after the first telephone call was received at the first local call station, the area party line indication corresponding to a geographic area associated with at least one call station." Amended Claims 18, 21, and 29 each include a similar recitation. Furthermore, amended Claim 32 is patentably distinguishable over the cited art for at least the reason that it recites, for example, "wherein the at least one termination point being configured to detect the area party line indication of the incoming telephone calls comprises the at least one termination point being configured to detect at least one indicator corresponding to a geographic area associated with the at least one termination point." Amended Claims 36 includes a recitation similar to amended Claim 32. Support for these amendments can be found in the specification at least on page 5, lines 16-23.

In contrast to the claimed subject matter, *Martin* at least does not disclose an area party line indicator corresponding to a geographic area. For example, *Martin* discloses that a system routes a caller to a chat room in which the caller can participate, contributing to a common interest topic among all the chatters in the chat room. (See col. 2, lines 4-7.) In *Martin*, the caller can be initially offered a "main menu" wherein the subscriber is given several main topics, each of which is associated with a chat room or channel. (See col. 2, lines 7-11.) *Martin's* caller may only select a chat room

associated with a particular chat topic. No where in *Martin* can a caller provide a selection corresponding to a particular geographic area. Consequently, *Martin* fails to disclose an area party line indicator corresponding to a geographic area associated with local call station.

Martin does not anticipate the claimed subject matter because *Martin* at least does not disclose "wherein the first telephone call providing the area party line indication comprises dialing at least one digit after the first telephone call was received at the first local call station, the area party line indication corresponding to a geographic area associated with at least one call station," as recited by amended Claim 1, or "wherein the at least one termination point being configured to detect the area party line indication of the incoming telephone calls comprises the at least one termination point being configured to detect at least one indicator corresponding to a geographic area associated with the at least one termination point," as recited by amended Claim 32. Amended Claims 18, 21, and 29 each include a similar recitation to Claim 1, and amended Claim 36 includes a similar recitation to Claim 32. Accordingly, independent Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36 are each patentably distinguishable over the cited art, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36.

Dependent Claims 2-17, 19-20, 22-28, 30,-31, 33-35, and 37 are also allowable at least for the reasons described above regarding independent Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36, and by virtue of their respective dependencies upon independent Claims 1, 18, 21, 29, 32 and 36. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these rejections of dependent Claims 2-17, 19-20, 22-28, 30-31, 33-35, and 37.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims. The preceding arguments are based only on the arguments in the Office Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects that were not addressed by the Examiner in the Office Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding argument in favor of patentability is advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability. Furthermore, the Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 13-2725.

Respectfully submitted,
MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.

P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, MN 55402-0903
404.954.5066

/D. Kent Stier/

Date: July 22, 2008

D. Kent Stier
Reg. No. 50,640

DKS:mdc

39262

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE